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ABSTRACT

This workplace skills memo writing course is designed to enable students to write more accurate and concise memos and be better able to deal with difficult memo writing situations in the workplace. Introductory material includes course description, objectives, topics, methods, materials, evaluation, and teacher tips. The course consists of four sessions, each of which has these components: objectives, topics, methods, materials list, and information sheets and handouts. Topics covered in the sessions include the following: writing diagram, topic selection and specification, four steps of writing, standard memo format, and complete sentences. (YLB)

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MERCER COUNTY
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Business Memo Writing

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P.R.I.D.E.

PEOPLE RETRAINING for INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE

CF 070162

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Business Memo Writing

Mercer County Community College

Division of Corporate and Community Programs

1200 Old Trenton Road

Trenton, NJ 08690

Elaine S. Weinberg

Director, Workplace Skills

Developed with funds from the United States Department of Education

National Workplace Literacy Program

1995

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Mercer County Community College thanks Carol Lewandowski, Senior Education Specialist/Curriculum Developer for creating this manual. Through her valuable contributions employees in manufacturing and service industries learned concepts relevant to their existing jobs and strategies for learning other tasks if that opportunity should arise.

WORKPLACE SKILLS TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

A factory or service center creates a classroom that is very different from the one we are used to seeing in colleges and adult schools, so it only follows that our approach to teaching in the factory should also differ.

Our goal is to teach employees skills that they need in order to be functional and successful in their work environment, and encourage them to apply those skills on the job and at home. For example, we motivate students to do the following:

- work more efficiently and more safely
- make fewer mistakes
- solve problems working interactively
- take greater responsibility for their jobs
- recognize the interconnectedness of the various jobs in their workplace
- be better communicators in the workplace

Company needs are revealed through a needs assessment. At that time, we also determine the basic skills needs of the employees. We are learner centered, as the individual employee's needs are considered alongside those of the company.

Once we have determined those needs, we develop curricula that incorporate basic skills, using the workplace literature (e.g. forms, applications, codes, abbreviations, charts and tables, handbooks, regulations, procedures, policies, memos, letters) of the company. Because each company is different, the needs and literature are also different; hence, we develop new materials for every company in which we teach. By utilizing these workplace items, we help students transfer and apply their skills directly to their jobs.

We rely on the classroom techniques of problem solving, cooperative learning, and group discussion. Our overall approach is concept based, with the emphasis on application, such as in role plays, dialogues, and group work. Despite the specific course titles, we incorporate the elements of math, English, and communication skills into all of our sessions.

In terms of students evaluation, after initial testing we give a pre-test and post-test in order to determine comprehension. Students receive feedback throughout the course from the instructor, as well as from fellow students as we sincerely believe in the powerful positive reinforcement of peer critiques and cooperative exchanges.

In essence, we believe that although we make the materials for the students with which to work, it is the students who truly make the class.

MEMO WRITING

In order to write clear and effective memos, employees must be aware of their writing style, their grammar, tone and organization. This course will enable students to write more accurate and concise memos and be better able to deal with difficult memo writing situations in the workplace.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- recognize their audience
- name their topic/main idea before writing
- organize their writing time using the 4 steps
- use the standard memo format
- write complete sentences
- brainstorm
- use correct punctuation
- get their point across using clear and specific words
  recognize and avoid bad writing: redundancies, repetition, wrong usage, wordiness
- write memos that have a clear and strong intended action/effect
- write memos that are reader friendly (using bullets, lists, numbers, etc.)
- put the audience's needs for information first

TOPICS:

- writing diagram
- topic selection and specification
- 4 steps of writing
- standard memo format
- complete sentences

MEMO WRITING

METHODS:

- individual writing
- peer critique
- worksheets and review
- class discussion

MATERIALS:

- diagrams
- handouts and worksheets
- lists
- sample company memos
- student generated memos

EVALUATION:

- students evaluate their own work
- in peer critique, students evaluate each other's work
- instructor evaluates completion of memo

TEACHER TIPS

- Students generate their own memos in class.
- Each class should have a writing time, a review time, an editing time, and a peer critique time.
- At the end of the class, students will have a portfolio of their own finished works.
- In terms of assigned topics – be sure to have a good idea of the types of situations your students actually write about and come up with a list of possible topics for them to use.
- Students bring in memos that they have written and use them for their own critiques and for peer evaluation.
- Students bring in memos that they have received and use them for critique.
- For the punctuation review, go over only those items with which the students are struggling. Do not approach this as a grammar class!

MEMO WRITING ♦ SESSION 1

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- consider and evaluate their potential audience
- use the 4-step plan for writing memo drafts
- use a correct and consistent memo format
- apply critical thinking skills to their writing in order to communicate more clearly and concisely
- write complete sentences
- use correct sentence punctuation

TOPICS:

- audience identification
- 4-step plan for memo writing
- memo format
- critical thinking and writing skills
- complete sentences
- punctuation review

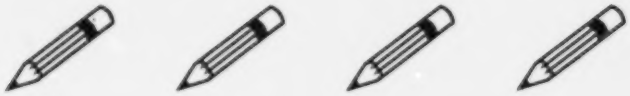
METHODS:

- class discussion
- partner work
- peer critique
- brainstorming

MATERIALS:

- worksheets

PRE-CLASS MEMO WRITING



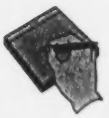
In the space below, write a memo about something familiar to you, or about something that you really have to communicate. Don't worry about organization, spelling or grammar just yet – merely write your typical day's memo.

Guidelines for Writing Memos

1. Be complete
2. Be concise
3. Be clear
4. Be correct
5. Be organized

THE STEPS FOR WRITING MEMOS

1. Think

2. Write 

3. Review

4. Correct

WRITING DIAGRAM

Writer	**Memo**	**Audience**
What purpose?	What topic?	What knowledge?
What information to to get across?	Details?	What relationship?
What style? Tone?	What format?	What purpose?
What action to cause?	How to cause it?	What to do as a result?

TYPICAL MEMO FORMAT

COMPANY
Memorandum

(flush left)
TO: Name , Title
FROM: (initial after your typed name , title)
SUBJECT: (be clear and specific)
DATE: date of writing

(Do not indent here)
This is a memo about how to format your memos. Do not indent the first sentence on the left. Instead, keep your paragraphs flush left.

Even if you start a new paragraph, keep it flush left – avoid the temptation to indent!!

Remember to keep your memo SHORT – no more than 3 paragraphs. The best memo is one that is a **single paragraph** with **bullets**, **numbers**, **stars**, or **lists** to make the information more accessible to the reader. If your memo runs on to 4, 5, 6 even 7 paragraphs, then something is wrong!! Reconsider your format and consider writing a report or proposal.

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A GOOD MEMO

Here is a sample of a **good memo.** Why is it so good?

COMPANY
Memorandum

TO: Steve Miller, Production Manager
FROM: Lori Jones, Human Resources
SUBJECT: PRIDE Classes
DATE: 5/6/94

The PRIDE classes with Mercer County Community College have started this month. These employees will be attending the **Writing class** from **5/8/94 to 6/9/94, Mondays and Thursdays, 1-3 p.m.**

George Abrahamson
Lisa Carter
Greg DeMonico
Barbara Gatto
Jean Inverner
Paul Jones
Lynn Kline
Bob Lewis
Steve Norris
Paula Porter
Donna Smith
Carol Zabrinski

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BE COMPLETE!!

If you want your audience to understand your message, your ideas must be complete and clear!! This means that you must consider these thought patterns:

1. ***Description:*** answers the question what size, what color, what shape, what code, what time, how often, etc.

   - Aim for clear description – don't write "in the afternoon," but give a precise time; don't write a "big meeting," but say how many people will attend.

   - Avoid unnecessary metaphors and similes in this type of writing. Don't write that the new raise policy will be "like winning the lottery," or that the new VP will treat everyone "like royalty." Give concise details but not imagery.

2. ***Narration***: tells a story

   - Use narration sparingly and only when required to remind the audience of the facts and history of the situation. Remember, these are familiar readers so they should know most of the background.

   - Use active voice, not passive voice.

BE COMPLETE!!

3. ***Process Analysis***: explains the steps for doing something, or tells how something works or is done

    - Use chronological order and begin with step 1; end with the final step and don't leave your audience hanging with questions regarding unmentioned steps.

    - Give information about what the consequences are of not following the steps. For example, after you give the steps for completing and returning the new insurance forms, you could note that if employees do not complete and submit the forms by a certain date, coverage may be affected.

4. ***Division and Analysis***: breaking something down into parts and describing the parts and how they work.

    - Be sure to include all of the parts! If you are describing the tasks of the new work team, be sure to include all of the tasks, not just the administrative or judicial aspects.

5. ***Classification***: breaking things down into categories.

    - Be clear in making your categories and in naming them. Look for commonalties within the group to help you name the group. For example, if you are classifying errors you can do so by machine, by shift, or by area – each has a different purpose and result.

BE COMPLETE!!

6. ***Comparison and Contrast***: looking at how things are different and/or similar

   - Be consistent in the elements you consider. A good format to remember is TOPIC/ASPECT:

T1/A1		T1/A1 & A2
T2/A1	or	T2/A1 & A2
T1/A2		
T2/A2		

7. ***Definition***: explaining what something means or is

   - Use when you have to explain a new policy or work issue. A dictionary definition is the drabbest – instead, consider how the definition works at your company. For example, an opening in UTILITY could lead to a job posting, and in order to give a good idea of the job requirements you would have to define the job of a UTILITY person.

COMPLETE SENTENCES

Even when you write the briefest memos, you must use **complete sentences.** A complete sentence is one that has the following:

1. a subject
2. a verb
3. a complete thought

COMPLETE SENTENCES

subject = the person or thing that is doing the action in the sentence

The president has decided to overhaul the machinery.
The new schedules are on the bulletin board.
We will have another team meeting next week.
It takes 2 hours to fix that machine.
Nobody arrived on time for the meeting.

COMMON MISTAKES

- assuming that the subject will carry over in the reader's mind:
  - ◊ The secretary took three days off last week. **Went to the beach.** (this is incomplete – use a pronoun to make it complete)
  - ◊ The secretary took three days off last week. ***She*** **went to the beach.**
- dropping the subject in a list of actions also causes fragments:
  - ◊ The employee came to work early. Worked through lunch. Stayed 2 hours overtime. Did a really good job. *(incorrect)*
  - ◊ The employee came to work early, worked through lunch, stayed 2 hours overtime, and in general did a really good job. *(correct)*
- starting a sentence with an infinitive (to work, to use, etc.) or an ING form:
  - ◊ To come to work on time and stay through lunch. *(incorrect)*
  - ◊ **She** will come to work on time and stay through lunch. *(correct)*
  - ◊ Trying to pack more than 100 bottles in an hour. *(incorrect)*
  - ◊ **He** was trying to pack more than 100 bottles in an hour. *(correct)*

COMPLETE SENTENCES

verb = the action that the person or thing is doing

The president **has decided** to overhaul the machinery.
The new schedules **are** on the bulletin board.
We **will have** another team meeting next week.
It **takes** 2 hours to fix that machine.
Nobody **arrived** on time for the meeting.

COMMON MISTAKES

- forgetting the verb in a list of subjects:
  - ◊ The president, the vice-president, the accountant and the clerical staff. (Well??? What did they do???)
- imbedding extra information into the sentence and getting distracted by that secondary verb
  - ◊ The new machine, which **cost** at least $1900. *(incorrect)*
    \
    (verb in descriptive clause, not the main clause)
  - ◊ The new machine **cost** at least $1900. *(correct)*
    \
    (verb in main clause)

COMPLETE SENTENCES

complete thought = an idea that does not leave the reader hanging; an independent thought

Because the machine broke constantly, we decided to buy a new one.
(This is a complex sentence with a dependent clause followed by an independent clause, so it is a *complete* idea)

Because the machine broke constantly. *(incomplete)*
(This is a dependent clause and cannot stand alone as a sentence!)

NOTE: You can use dependent clauses *in* sentences, but not *as* sentences!!

Here is a list of words that make dependent clauses:

after
although
as
as if
because
before
even if
even though
ever since
how
if
in order that
since
so that
than
that
though
unless
until
what
whatever
when
whenever
whereas
wherever
whether
which
whichever
while
who
whom
whose
why
where

SENTENCE TYPES

1. **Simple Sentence:**
   - contains a subject and verb
   - expresses a complete thought
   - considered a single independent clause

   Examples:

   ◊ He came to work at 8:00.
   ◊ They brought the materials to the warehouse.
   ◊ Third shift starts at 11:00 p.m.

2. **Compound Sentence**
   - contains two independent clauses joined by a **FANBOY**
   - (for/and/nor/but/or/yet/so)
   - expresses a complete thought

   Examples:

   ◊ He came to work at 8:00, but he didn't start working until 8:30.
   ◊ They brought the materials to the warehouse so they could store them.
   ◊ The managers had a meeting and they decided to offer more overtime.

3. **Complex Sentence**
   - contains a main clause (independent clause)
   - contains a subordinate clause (identifiable by a word or an expression whose completion relies on the main clause: since, because, although, even though, before, after, while, during)
   - expresses a complete thought

   Examples:

   ◊ Even though he had no time, he volunteered to reorganize the shelves.
   ◊ Since they took on the account, they have received many inquiries.
   ◊ She packed the bottles after she took them off the machine.

COMPLETE SENTENCES

Read these sentences and determine if they are complete. If they are complete, then write **C** on the line. If not, then write **I** and try to determine what is missing.

1. Although our gross figures are down. _____

2. Reorganizing the work schedules to accommodate those with second and third jobs. _____

3. The information has arrived via modem. _____

4. Before he came to this department. _____

5. Please inform me of any production changes before our next meeting. _____

6. The maintenance department, the utility department, and the packing department. _____

7. Helping with the boxes and teaching the new workers how to pack the boxes. _____

8. The office picnic, which is always held at Mercer County Park. _____

9. The new smoking policy has gone into effect. _____

10. Which means no one can smoke in the cafeteria. _____

SENTENCE PUNCTUATION

1. Period at the end
2. Capital letter at the beginning

EZ comma rules:

- **IC, IC.** = comma splice

  - He works overtime, he has a good attitude.
  - The machine is down, we can't use it.

- To fix a comma splice, use one of the **FANBOYS** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so):

  - He works overtime, **and** he has a good attitude.
  - The machine is down, **so** we can't use it.

- Or make them 2 separate sentences with periods at the end of both:

  - He works overtime. He has a good attitude.
  - The machine is down. We can't use it.

- Or use a larger word of dependence and a semicolon:

  - He works overtime; **moreover,** he has a good attitude.
  - The machine is down; **therefore,** we can't use it.

SENTENCE PUNCTUATION

EZ run on rules:

- If you have a **run on** sentence, then it is like a comma splice but without the comma:
    - He did the SPC for that machine he made a chart.
- Fix a run on any of the same ways that you fix a comma splice:
    - He did the SPC for that machine and he made a chart.
    - He did the SPC for that machine. Then he made a chart.
    - First he did the SPC, and then he made a chart.

SENTENCE PUNCTUATION

This memo is a nightmare of run ons, comma splices, and other format problems. Rewrite the memo and fix the problems.

COMPANY

Memorandum

TO: John
FROM: Tim
TOPIC: Insurance
DATE: 8/6

The new insurance forms have arrived they are in Donna's office. Which is next to the receptionist area so you can pick up your new forms there. And fill them out.

Give them back to Donna when you are finished make sure you have signed the form at the bottom. On the line. If you have a spouse then he/she must sign it also the deadline for these to be returned in Aug. 4, 1994.

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MEMO WRITING ♦ SESSION 2

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- use active voice consistently
- write with clear modifiers
- avoid redundancies and wordiness when writing
- use confusing words (homonyms) correctly
- use lists, bullets, and numbers to elucidate their information
- avoid clichés when writing
- choose an appropriate tone based on their audience

TOPICS:

- active vs. passive voice
- clear modifiers
- redundancies
- wordiness
- homonyms
- lists, bullets, numbers for clarity
- clichés
- tones

METHODS:

- class discussion
- partner work
- peer critique

MATERIALS:

- worksheets

BE ACTIVE!!

Avoid the **passive voice** and use the **active voice** when you write – not only does it save words, but it gets your idea across in a clearer style and with less possibility for confusion.

Look at the difference between these 2 voices – both sentences express the same idea, but which would *you* rather *read*?

Passive: The decision that new fire extinguishers be purchased was made by the safety committee at the meeting held by the managers after the new safety rules were discussed.

Active: At the managers' meeting, the safety committee discussed the new safety rules and decided to buy new fire extinguishers.

BE ACTIVE!!

Rewrite this memo – take it out of the passive and put it into the active voice.

COMPANY
Memorandum

TO: Office Personnel
FROM: President Jones
SUBJECT: Smoking Policy
DATE: 9/4/93

It has been brought to my attention that the most recent non-smoking policy has been violated by employees. The policy was written by the safety committee 2 months ago, and was promptly implemented by supervisors and line leaders 1 month ago. In that time, it has been violated and ignored by several employees, whose names shall remain undisclosed. Let it not go unnoticed that records are being kept and points are being given by me to those employees who ignore the new non-smoking policy.

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BE CLEAR!!

Don't misplace or dangle your modifiers – this can cause confusion, not to mention hilarity!!

Example of a dangling modifier:

Broken and in need of repair, Steve tried to fix the machine again.
(Poor Steve!!)

Correction:

Steve tried to fix the machine, which was broken and in need of repair.
Broken and in need of repair, the machine gave Steve a hard time.

Example of a misplaced modifier:

The manager put the information with his secretary in the file.
(Oh no!! Poor secretary!!)

Correction:

The manager put the information in the file and gave it to his secretary.
(No doubt what happened!)

BE CLEAR!!

What's wrong with these modifiers? See how you can fix them.

1. Working 10 hours a day and offering to stay late for clean up, the work was getting done by all of the hourly employees.

2. The janitor put the trash with his helper in the dumpster.

3. Having discussed the wage increases and vacation policy, coffee was poured for all of us managers.

4. The bottles are burnt by the new employees around the rims.

AVOID REDUNDANCIES

✂ re-do it again...

Sometimes we try so hard to get our point across that we get it across *twice*. For example, **to rewrite** means **to write again**, so if *I rewrite the memo again* I actually write it *two more times,* right?

Why are these expressions redundancies?

1. to closely scrutinize

2. to constantly persist

3. most favorite

4. incorrectly miscalculated

5. a joint cooperation

6. a wise insight

7. at 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon

8. a necessary requirement

AVOID WORDINESS

Remember this: **less is more**. The fewer words you can use, the stronger your message will be, and the easier for the reader to get your point.

Here are some traditional wordy expressions that we feel compelled to use when we write. In fewer and simpler words, what do they really mean?

At this point in time _____

Despite the fact that _____

In the event that _____

During the time that _____

In a hasty manner _____

We were not apprised of the fact that _____

We will proceed to examine _____

In a different manner of speaking _____

At this juncture of temporal events _____

Irregardless _____

We are clearly of the same opinion _____

AVOID WORDINESS

Also avoid inflated language. Don't try to impress or intimidate – remember that you are trying to **communicate**. Fancy or verbose language can ***obfuscate*** that purpose!!

Which is easier to read?

- Illumination is required to be extinguished on these premises after nightfall.
- Lights out after dark.

Here are some extreme examples of inflated language. What do they mean?

1. Perform a fluttering action, perform a fluttering action, minuscule illuminating and swirling astronomical body.

2. Propel, propel, propel your craft, unobtrusively in the free flowing natural solution comprised of H2O.

3. The sample canines exhibited a 100% mortality rate.

4. Communication is the imparting of meaningful informational modes or concepts that impact on interpersonal inputs and interfacing.

CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR!!

Be careful in your **usage** -- a lot of words sound exactly or somewhat alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings. These sets of similar words are called **homonyms**.

The best examples of homonyms are the words ***to / two / too***. What is the difference between them?

Here is a list of the most commonly confused words. Pick the ones that you have the most trouble with, look them up in the dictionary, and see if you can see the difference between the uses.

affect / effect
its / it's
their / they're / there
advice / advise
device / devise
break / brake
personal / personnel
stationery / stationary
role / roll
week / weak
bored / board
for / four
loose / lose

moral / morale
right / write
instance / instants
past / passed
your / you're
we're / were / where
principal / principle
peace / piece
through / threw
weather / whether
hour / our
choose / chose
new / knew

CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR!!

Circle the correct word to complete these sentences.

1. The secretary ordered new **stationery / stationary** supplies and then had to store them in the closet with the **stationery / stationary** shelves.

2. My **principal / principle** idea is not to overhaul the system, but to upgrade some of the operational **principals / principles**.

3. Take my **advice / advise** and work a few hours overtime - it really is good **advice / advise**.

4. If you have a **personal / personnel** problem, then talk to one of our human resource people in the **personal / personnel** department.

5. The **breaks / brakes** on my car always **break / brake** after a cold winter.

6. The managers who **chose / choose** the meeting time will also have to **chose / choose** the meeting location.

7. The humidity had a bad **affect / effect** on the office equipment, and we hope the dry air doesn't **affect / effect** the machines.

8. The company will **device / devise** a new **device / devise** for keeping track of our employee's late days.

WRITE FOR EASY READING

Use **bullets** whenever you can to set off important information that can be read and processed quickly.

Here is the information about the PRIDE program:

1. students sign up for their own courses
2. instructors come on site
3. there are no tests or grades
4. attendance is recommended, but not mandatory

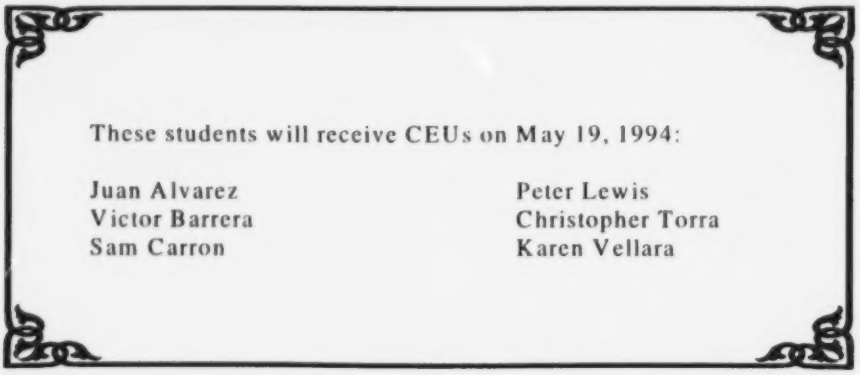
Use numbers when you are giving steps in instructions:

Make sure you do the following with your new insurance forms:

1. Make the necessary changes in family or doctor information
2. Sign the form at the bottom and on the back
3. Return the form to HR by 4/5/93.

WRITE FOR EASY READING

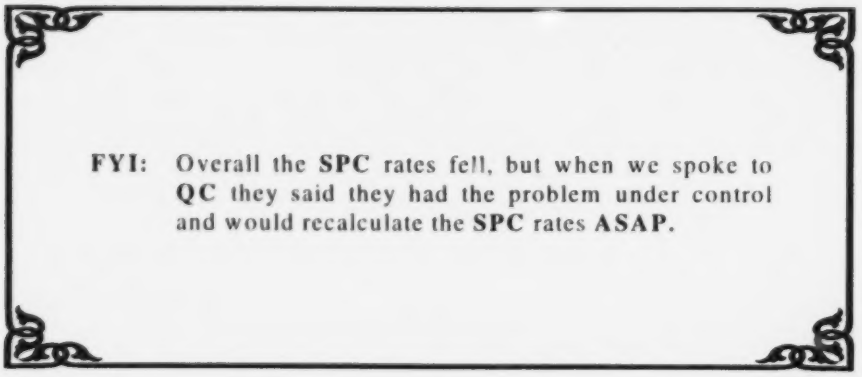
Use lists whenever you can to make the information clearer and accessible:



These students will receive CEUs on May 19, 1994:

Juan Alvarez
Victor Barrera
Sam Carron
Peter Lewis
Christopher Torra
Karen Vellara

Use abbreviations when you know that you reader will be familiar with them:



FYI: Overall the **SPC** rates fell, but when we spoke to **QC** they said they had the problem under control and would recalculate the **SPC** rates **ASAP.**

BE CONCISE!!!

Avoid big words that you feel might impress or intimidate your audience. Instead, use simple words with clear meanings:

We will **utilize** the new manual. → We will **use** the new manual.

The meeting will **commence** at noon. → The meeting will **begin** at noon.

Here is a list of some awful and awfully overused "big words." What smaller words can you think of that are more concise and user friendly?

1. terminate _____
2. administer _____
3. facilitate _____
4. facsimile _____
5. aggrandize _____
6. elucidate _____

BE CONCISE !!!

Avoid clichés and similes!! These may sound clever when we talk, but when we write they become **crutches** and eventually just get hokier and hokier!!

Here are some especially annoying and outdated clichés and images:

pleased as punch	sick as a dog
rich as a king	the big chief
busy as a bee	thank your lucky stars
pull a rabbit out of your hat	out to lunch
put your nose to the grindstone	big fish in a little pond
do your homework	the early bird
hold a pow wow	smoking gun
bite the bullet	a stuffed shirt
come on board	take the helm
bang for your buck	ball in your court

FORMAL AND INFORMAL TONES

- A **formal tone** does not imply big words and jargon. Instead, it requires *professionalism and clarity*.

- An **informal tone**, on the other hand, can be offensive as it might be too familiar or unprofessional.

Look at these 2 sentences and decide which is extremely formal and which is extremely informal.

1. Please be so kind as to reply immediately to our departmental concern.

2. If you don't answer my question, I'll come and raise the roof!

Your best bet is to aim for somewhere in the middle, keeping the professional tone but getting rid of the stuffy and inflated language:

3. Get back to me ASAP with a reply.

Read this memo and figure out what the topic is, the details, and the action: then rewrite the memo, getting rid of the jargon, glaring informalities, wordiness, and other verbal atrocities!

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Employees
FROM: Payroll
TOPIC: Payroll
DATE: August 4, 1993

This memo is to inform you that we are no longer using the same banking institution as we were previously utilizing. In other words, at this point in time we are making a change in our banking alliance.

The former institution, **Hamilton Trust,** has increased its checking user fees and instead of accepting that new fee policy we have decided to make a move to another banking institution. As a result of this most recent banking change, we will issue checks from our new account at **Packard Trust Co**. This new change will take effect with the checks that will be newly issued on August 20, 1993. The checks for this current week will still be drawn from our old account, and you can cash those as you normally would, under regular circumstances, at your convenience and in your regular manner at your preferred institutions of choice.

In the future, and only for a short period of time until which time your own banks recognize the change in our own company checking account, checks cashed at banks other than the previously aforementioned financial institution will require a form of identification (an ID such as a driver's license or social security card or work ID will be sufficient).

We are confident that this change is a change for the better. If you have any concerns or should you experience any problems whatsoever with this new account on your payroll check, please contact us as soon as is reasonably possible and we will get on the horn and get in touch with your financial institution and shake them up so they will cash your check without hassles.

MEMO WRITING ♦ SESSION 3

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- use punctuation to enhance their messages
- edit for spelling and punctuation

TOPICS:

- punctuation review
- editing review

METHODS:

- class discussion
- partner work
- peer critique

MATERIALS:

- worksheets

APOSTROPHES

' ' ' ' '

Apostrophes for Contraction

1. Use an apostrophe to replace the removed letter(s):

We are	=	we're
can not	=	can't
we have eaten	=	we've eaten

Note: *He's* could mean **he is** or **he has**, and you need to know the context to determine the tense.

He's tired	=	he is tired
He's eaten	=	he has eaten

Write the contractions for these words.

1. Did not
2. Will not
3. Should not
4. It is
5. She has
6. She is
7. Could not
8. I would
9. They have
10. We are
11. You are
12. They would

APOSTROPHES

' ' ' ' '

Apostrophes for possession

1. Use an apostrophe and an S to show possession:

- ◊ Carol's book
- ◊ Lorna's pencil
- ◊ the student's notebook

2. If the name/noun ends in an S, you have two options:
1) add only the apostrophe:
2) add the apostrophe and the S

- ◊ Luis' book or Luis's book
- ◊ Jesus' mother or Jesus's mother
- ◊ the boss' office or the boss's office

3. If the noun is plural and you are showing plural possession, add the S to make the countable noun plural then add just the apostrophe

- * the teacher's book = one teacher and his/her book
- * the teachers' lounge = many teachers use the lounge

4. If the spelling changes on the plural, make the change, then add the apostrophe after the S to show possession:

- * the company's policy = one company
- * the companies' policy = more than one company

APOSTROPHES

5. If the plural is irregular, use apostrophe S to show possession:

* the women's room
* the children's baby-sitter

6. If the plural and singular noun are the same, add apostrophe S:

* the sheep's barn

7. If you are using the possessive for an indefinite pronoun, use 'S.

* anyone's everyone's someone's
* no one's somebody's

REMEMBER:

Possessive pronouns that replace the noun **do not** take an apostrophe:

yours	*not* your's
theirs	*not* their's
ours	*not* our's
hers	*not* her's

BE CAREFUL!

It is = it's (contraction)

its = possession (no apostrophe for the pronoun possessive)

Example: **It's** unfortunate that the company lost 10% of **its** profits.

COMMAS

, , , , ,

1. Use a comma in a compound sentence between the 2 independent clauses and before the **FANBOYS** unless it obstructs the flow.

   IC, for IC.
   IC, but IC.

   Examples:

   - ◊ He asked for a promotion, **but** he got a demotion.
   - ◊ She had to go to the warehouse, **so** she left early.
   - ◊ The shipment was late, **for** it was incorrectly addressed.
   - ◊ QC checked the bottles, **yet** a few went out damaged.

2. Use commas around **removable** information.

   Examples:

   - ◊ The house, **made of wood and cement**, was demolished in 1988.
   - ◊ The company, **a turbine manufacturer**, has three locations.
   - ◊ Steve, **who has worked for the company for 10 years**, has taken his GED.

COMMAS

3. Use commas to separate items in a list. The items can be things (nouns) or action phrases.

Examples:

◊ He brought nails, screws, tacks, and a hammer.
◊ They take the order, call the customer, check the order, and
◊ ship the merchandise.

NOTE: The final comma in the series before the "and" is optional, but it depends on the context. If the reader could be confused without the comma, then put it in.

Examples:

◊ He drinks tea, beer and milk.
◊ The afternoon garbage man will drive the truck, make the stops, eat and pick up the garbage.
◊ This being my last will and testament, I am leaving my estate to be divided
◊ among my sons: Bill, George and Steve.

4. Use a comma between a subordinate clause and a main clause.
SC , MC.

Examples:

◊ Even though it was 110 degrees, he was wearing a sweater.
◊ Since they lost the key to the room, they had to break down the door.

NOTE: If you put the MC first, you don't need a comma.
MC , SC

Example:

◊ They had to break down the door since they lost their key.
(MC) (SC)

COMMAS

5. Use a comma to set of a direct quote.

Examples:

◊ He said, "The meeting will be at noon."
◊ They asked, "Where is the meeting being held?"

NOTE: In reported speech, omit the comma.

Examples:

◊ He said the meeting would be at noon.
◊ They asked where the meeting was being held.

6. Use commas between adjectives of equal importance.

Examples:

◊ She is a wise, witty woman.
◊ The big, expensive, obnoxious American car was parked illegally.

NOTE: use a comma between adjectives when you would say "and"

Examples:

◊ The big AND expensive car is parked illegally.

But: The expensive American car (you wouldn't say expensive AND American car)

COMMAS AND SEMICOLONS

DO NOT use a comma between two independent clauses (IC , IC.). This error is known as a **comma splice**, because you are *splicing* together two ideas that could stand independently.

- ◊ He was late, he came to work at 9:00.
- ◊ They never replaced the part, the machine was down all week.

HOW TO FIX A COMMA SPLICE?

1. Use a period to separate the 2 clauses, making 2 separate sentences.

   IC . IC .

2. Use a comma and a FANBOYS to separate the 2 clauses.

   IC , so IC.
   IC , for IC.
   IC , but IC.
   IC , and IC.
   IC , yet IC.
   IC , nor IC.

3. Use a semicolon to separate the 2 clauses.

   IC ; IC.

4. Use a semicolon and a transition word (followed by a comma) to separate the 2 clauses.

   IC ; however, IC.
   IC ; nevertheless, IC.
   IC ; regardless, IC.
   IC; moreover, IC.
   IC; in addition, IC.
   IC; consequently, IC.

SEMICOLONS

; ; ; ; ;

Semicolons are the most underrated piece of punctuation! Give them a chance and let them work for you!

LONG ITEMS or CLARIFICATIONS IN A LIST:

1. Use semicolons between long or wordy items in a list, and commas between the adjectives and phrases.

Confusing list with commas:

> There were several reasons why she hated going to the warehouse alone: the dark, damp space scared her, the extreme quiet rankled her nerves, made her skin crawl, and left her tense, and her fear of being locked in, a fear that stemmed from her childhood, froze her in her tracks.

Clearer list with semicolons and commas:

> There were several reasons why she hated going to the warehouse alone: the dark, damp space scared her; the extreme quiet rankled her nerves, made her skin crawl, and left her tense; and her fear of being locked in, a fear that stemmed from her childhood, froze her in her tracks.

SEMICOLONS

2. Use commas between items and clarifications, then semicolons between the separate items in a list.

Example:

Many people attended the meeting: Paul Smith, President, Ken Lewis, Vice President, Stan Heim, Marketing Representative, and Paula Stenhouse, the secretary.

How many people attended that meeting?

Many people attended the meeting: Paul Smith, President; Ken Lewis, Vice President; Stan Heim, Marketing Representative; and Paula Stenhouse, the secretary.

How many people attended this meeting?

Note: If you are giving titles and names, be consistent - if you start with the title, then keep starting with the title followed by the name. It doesn't matter which style you choose, just ***be consistent!***

COLONS

1. Use colons to introduce a list. MAKE SURE that you have a **complete sentence before** the colon.

   Example:

   Many different classes are being offered in out PRIDE program: English, Math, and Writing.

   But not The classes are: English, Math, and Writing.

   Example:

   The new shift times are as follows: A (8-3 p.m.), B (3-11 p.m.).

   But not The new shift times are: A (8-3 p.m.), B (3-11 p.m.).

   Biggest COLON error: using *including* and then a colon.

   Wrong: We have many classes, including: Math, English, and ESL. (Since the colon is like saying "including," what you are saying is including including – a clear redundancy!!)

   Right: We have many classes: Math, English, and ESL.

2. Use a colon to come to a **conclusion or generalization.**

   Example:

   He had no other choice: he had to change shifts. The wheels were broken, the radiator was smoking, and the fenders were falling off: her car was a piece of junk.

PUNCTUATION REVIEW

Put any and all punctuation into these sentences (: ; , ? .).

1. During the meeting the manager was shrewd clever and controlled but the order went to the companies competition

2. In spite of the Equal Opportunities Act women still find it difficult to move up in the company let alone become president

3. We thought we would have to work over the Labor Day weekend therefore we were delighted when we finished the order two days before schedule

4. When does the managers meeting take place

5. The employees handbook is updated occasionally when there are policy changes when there are holiday changes and at the end of every year

PUNCTUATION REVIEW

6. The Christmas bonuses were distributed on December 21 but Bill and Mary two workers in the warehouse complained that they hadn't gotten theirs yet they had a Merry Christmas

7. My new office contains a lot of new furniture a top of the line IBM compatible computer a laser printer a modern streamlined wooden credenza and an eye sensitive environment sensitive halogen lamp

8. The guard at the security house is thorough and reliable he always asks for identification and often requires strangers to show a second form of ID a drivers license a social security card or a recent photo ID

MEMO WRITING ♦ SESSION 4

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- avoid stilted business writing language
- use specific details and information
- make correct and clear comparisons
- present bad news in a positive way

TOPICS:

- stilted business language
- logical comparisons
- specific details
- bad news in a good way

METHODS:

- class discussion
- partner work
- peer critique

MATERIALS:

- worksheets

PUNCTUATION REVIEW

Rewrite these run on sentences and use any of these solutions:

- FANBOY plus comma
- period to separate
- semicolon
- semicolon and transition word

Example: The collator is broken again this is the third time this month we will have to get a service contract for next year.

◊ The collator is broken again, and this is the third time this month, so we will have to get a service contract for next year.

◊ The collator is broken again. This is the third time this month. We will have to get a service contract for next year.

◊ The collator is broken again for the third time this month; we will have to get a service contract for next year.

◊ The collator is broken again for the third time this month; therefore, we will have to get a service contract for next year.

PUNCTUATION REVIEW

1. The company has implemented a new non-smoking policy employees will have to leave the building if they want to smoke.

2. As you are aware, postal rates will be increasing as of February 1995 we will have to re-calculate the estimate for your projected services

3. Company wide inventory will occur on February 5 and 6 from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. each department is expected to participate.

4. Mr. Lewiston and Ms. Pilster from BMW are visiting the offices on Friday casual day will be on Friday as usual.

5. Piece number 542A has been relocated to shelf A piece number 543C has been relocated to shelf C piece number 544 D has been relocated to shelf D this is to facilitate the picking process.

STYLISTIC TOOLS: LETHAL EXPRESSIONS

Learn to recognize and stay away from overused trite business writing expressions. Here is a list of lethal expressions. In what other way can you say the same idea?

along these lines	as per your request
as per our conversation	as per our agreement
at the present time	enclosed herewith
for the purpose of	for the amount of
pending receipt of	in view of the fact that
pursuant to our talk	please be advised
please be warned	please be reminded
regarding the topic of	following the idea of

thank you for your interest and attention in this matter

thank you for your infinite patience

STYLISTIC TOOLS: SPECIFICALLY SPEAKING

Be sure to use specific names, numbers, dates, times, quantities, places, titles, and so on – otherwise your writing is vague and it becomes difficult for the reader to "connect" to your message.

Vague: The woman was fired recently.
Specific: Ms. Kline was fired on December 1, 1994.

Vague: They sat in the cafeteria reading magazines.
Specific: The departmental managers sat in the cafeteria reading. Sports Illustrated.

Vague: Profits have fallen a bit.
Specific: Profits have fallen 2% in this quarter.

Vague: The BMS portfolios have been moved to a new location.
Specific: The BMS 1995 promotional portfolios have been moved to section D, shelf 3, area 2.

STYLISTIC TOOLS: MAKING CORRECT COMPARISONS

Don't get lazy and trail off in your idea!! If you are comparing two things, make sure that they are **similar** things.

What's wrong with this example?

- The taxes in NJ are higher than Pennsylvania.

The *taxes* in one state are being compared to *another state*. What you want to do is compare the *taxes* in one state to the *taxes in another state*. A clear way to say this is the following:

- The taxes in NJ are higher than those in Pennsylvania.
- The taxes in NJ are higher than Pennsylvania's.
- The taxes in NJ are higher than in Pennsylvania.

STYLISTIC TOOLS: MAKING CORRECT COMPARISONS

Fix these bad comparisons.

1. The employees at HOD are friendlier than XYZ.

2. The tires on Lorna's 4-wheel drive are bigger than my car.

3. The costs for the brochure mailing are lower than the letters.

4. The number of Hispanics working here has increased and we have more than Asians.

5. Those old green file cabinets in my department are older than marketing.

STYLISTIC TOOLS: MAKING CORRECT COMPARISONS

Another error or confusion that occurs with comparisons is when the object is confused with the subject. Look at this example and think of what it could mean:

- I like my job more than my husband.

To make it absolutely clear, be sure to finish out the sentence:

- I like my job more than I like my husband.
- I like my job more than my husband does.

Fix these confusions.

1. I eat pizza more than my dog.

2. The department uses more perforated paper than the computer.

3. Women like children more than men.

4. This computerized scale weighs more than the analog scale.

BAD NEWS IN A GOOD WAY

Note the differences between the following thumbs up and thumbs down sentences.

You failed to notice	Let me point out that
You neglected to mention	We may consider also
You overlooked the fact that	One additional idea is
You missed the point	From another perspective
If you persist in	If you choose to
I see no alternative but	Our clear plan of action is

What do you notice about the **negative** statements?

What do you notice about the more **positive** ones?

BAD NEWS IN A GOOD WAY

Take these extremely negative expressions and put them into more palpable language.

You have made a serious mistake

Your company has erred

The only way to solve this

Your ineffectual tactics

Your clear lack of a long term vision

Your lack of updated information

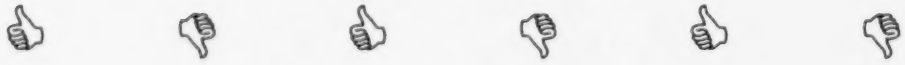
BAD NEWS IN A GOOD WAY

Sometimes we have to deny a client's request, or inform a client that they have not fulfilled a prior obligation. Have you ever struggled with the right way to say something not very good?

Perhaps you have asked yourself these questions:

- How can I deny but still remain essentially positive?
- How can I convey the NO answer without falling back on baffling expressions or sugar coating the language?
- How can I say NO in a nice way without misleading the client?

Remember: even criticism or a NO can be delivered positively.



Take a moment to **praise**, then to state the error/problem/situation. This at least prefaces the bad with the good. Be sure to include **specific details** as to why something has not worked, or why something cannot be done. Then close with an **upbeat** statement for the future – as if to say that this is behind us and we can move on to continue our professional relationship.

BAD NEWS IN A GOOD WAY

One of your employees has eagerly been awaiting a transfer to another account – an account that carries a lot of prestige and corporate power. This is the memo that he received regarding his transfer.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Steve McCann
FROM: Dave Lewis
DATE: Nov. 1, 1994
RE: Transfer

I regret to inform you that your request to transfer to the Campbell's account has been denied. At this point in time there are no openings for account reps. Thanks for your application anyway.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE